

Nine dumb questions that every smart employee should be able to answer

People who show up to get services from county offices frequently need information as much as they need particular services. If the people at the counter or on the phone don't know or provide bad information, citizens walk away steamed at "stupid government employees."

For example, do your employees know it's the tax assessor-collector who registers voters but it's the county clerk (or election administrator) who is responsible for questions about conducting elections?

Here are some basic questions that every employee who deals with the public should be confident in answering:

1. If someone from out-of-town is coming to your courthouse or office
2. Can you tell the average citizen where the major county offices are, their phone numbers and what they do?
3. What county office is responsible for jury summons information?
4. Describe specifically how to get to the nearest public restrooms, pay phones and smoking areas?
5. How does a citizen find out which commissioner precinct they're in? How about justice of the peace and constable precincts?
6. If a citizen does not speak English or if someone's hearing is impaired, is there someone on staff to answer questions? Is there a back-up?
7. Where can a citizen find an agenda for the next Commissioners Court meeting? Do you know when the Commissioners regularly meet? When and where is the agenda posted?
8. If a citizen slips and falls (or has some other accident) on county property, where can immediate medical help be obtained (and who is the county's risk manager, responsible for insurance claims)?
9. Does the employee of each elected official know how long the official has been in office, and when he or she is up for re-election?★